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Yucca Mountain Site Public Hearing

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U.S. Department of Energy
January 20, 2000
The America's Center
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Subject: Yucca Mountain Site Containment Predictability

1 The establishment of the Yucca Mountain Repository is dictated by economic rather than safety concerns. The reason for transporting and stockpiling these fuel rod assemblies at one location in Nevada is that electric utility companies want to keep generating more of these high-level wastes and are running out of storage space in their on-site pools.

MA The so-called "permanent" facility at Yucca Mountain is extremely costly and fraught with hazard – for everyone but the nuclear power generators and their shareholders. Citizens are subsidizing a near \$50 billion relocation of industry wastes, \$⁴~~10~~ billion of which has already been spent on studying the Yucca Mountain plan. What do we get in return? The possibility of transportation accidents releasing radioactive contamination in heavily populated areas, and no assurance of the long-term efficacy of such storage.

2... In the report titled "Geochemical Behavior of Long-Lived Radioactive Wastes" (ORNL-TM-4481) compiled by Ferruccio Gera for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (1975), Gera notes in the introduction, "It is clear that these wastes will have to be contained for time periods well in excess of the recorded history of mankind." He states that it is necessary to "design a disposal facility in such a manner that it will withstand at least a few hundred thousand years of geologic change. It is known, however, that the


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2 cont. longest-lived nuclides in the waste will present some radiological hazard for millions of years and it is not possible to absolutely guarantee that waste will be contained for such long periods of time."

To the taxpayer, the assumption made by Gera and promoted by our federal government and the nuclear power industry that the integrity of containers and the stability of the environment will permit no release of contamination for upwards of thousands of years is lunacy.

Unanticipated man-made events -- such as war or terrorist activity or environmental degradation -- or events occurring in nature -- such as geologic changes caused by earthquakes or volcanic activity or even impacts by asteroids, or the inevitable deterioration of containers -- make such long-term predictions ludicrous.

3 As there is at present no containment that can survive unimpaired for the duration of the hazard, the only sane course is to stop the production of high-level radioactive wastes until a method of disposal or treatment is developed that does not rely on containment. The \$42.5 billion projected cost of transporting and storing the wastes at Yucca Mountain would be far better spent on the research and development of a method of treatment. Until such a scientific breakthrough does occur, the production of high-level radioactive wastes should cease and the present stockpile of fuel rod assemblies should continue to be stored on-site at non-operating reactors.


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